

PART I

URBAN STUDIES

Introduction

Having been told in our prologue that the town is the place where change is initiated and the place *par excellence* where investigations of movement and change can most profitably be made we shall begin with three studies of aspects of family life in suburban and urban areas of Ghana. The first study that of Margaret Peil is set in Ashaiman, a suburb of Tema. Her concern is the acquaintanceship process and the effects upon it of marital status. The second study by Lila Engberg focuses on families and their welfare in the new rapidly growing community of Madina near Accra and explores whether or not welfare status of mothers and children could be predicted by examining the dimensions of the family sub-unit of which they are members.

Finally in chapter three Carmel Dinan examines the socialization process in Sabon Zongo, Accra, looking at both the informal modes whereby children are trained in the values and behaviour patterns of their local community, through taking part in family and neighbourhood interaction and secondly formal schooling. Here the foci of interest are customs and institutions including fostering, Quranic and state schools and the processes whereby traditionalism and conservatism are maintained and a distinctive sub-culture perpetuated in the midst of a changing urban setting.

CHAPTER I

MEN'S LIB? THE EFFECT OF MARRIAGE ON THE SOCIAL LIFE OF MEN IN ASHAIMAN

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In a male-dominated society, one tends to assume that a man is free to come and go whether he is married or not. Marriage only ties down the young woman, who was already tied down to helping her mother long before marriage. This assumption seems to be confirmed by the literature on African urban life. Plotnicov (1967) implies that married men go where and when they please and seldom take their wives along. Busia (1950) points out that young boys become delinquents because they are free to run the streets whereas their sisters are at home helping mother. Parkin (1969:65) found that women in the suburb of Kampala studied, tended to have most of their friends among their neighbours since most of their time was spent near home. Men, on the other hand, less often had friends who were neighbours; they had far more opportunities than their wives to meet people living in other parts of the town.

In connection with a study of social life in Ashaiman (a suburb of Tema), we asked respondents how easy they found it to get to know people and whether they thought single people or those living with a spouse get to know more people. The same question was asked in a recent study in Kaduna, and it was the responses in this study (in a much more male dominated and polygynous society than is the case in southern Ghana) which led me to examine the Ashaiman data more closely. The Ashaiman schedules are not available as this paper is being written, but answers given in Kaduna put the situation quite clearly. A single mechanic reported that a single man 'goes to many places and makes friends without caring what is going on at home;' a factory operative (also single) said, 'a married man won't be popular;' a newspaper vendor said, 'a married man is confined to his wife, but an unmarried person is liberal and free to move.' A married contractor pointed out that 'a single person will have more friends because he can leave his house at any time and he can come back whenever he likes; in addition he moves with a different type of people;' a married gatekeeper said, 'a single man can go where he likes without being asked;' a woman teacher agreed that the single man is more free; 'he has no wife to restrict his movements and a married clerical worker reported, 'when one is single both male and female will be free to enter his house, but if married the wife might think or be suspicious.'

There were a few voices for the greater social possibilities of married life; one man cited the proverb, 'one tree cannot make a forest' and others pointed out that a married man or woman has two sets of kinsmen and friends of either spouse may visit the house; others reported that one meets new people at the wedding and that married men are considered more 'reasonable and 'mature' and hence more suitable for friendship. But the general impression seems to be that high sociability is the prerogative of the unmarried man, and that marriage brings a narrowing of the social circle and a greater proportion of one's time spent at home with the wife and children.

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The husband may rule the home, but his wife is often able to exert considerable control over his time outside of working hours.

In this paper, the ninety eight respondents in Ashaiman are divided into three categories: the single, the married with spouse in residence (hereafter simply designated as married) and those whose spouse lived outside Ashaiman (hereafter called the separated, though nine widowed or divorced women are included). The small quota sample of seventy three men and twenty-five women were selected for hour-long social network interviews on the basis of an extensive sample census of Ashaiman in mid-1970. A quota sample was used to ensure representation of various age, ethnic, occupational and religious subgroups and migrants of varying lengths of stay in Ashaiman within a small sample. Although the small size of the sample means that many of the differences discussed are not statistically significant, their consistency indicates that the differences really exist. Further studies are underway which should help to clarify the situation and to add to the generalizability of the findings.

Table 1
The Sample

<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Sex</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
Single	16	3	19
Married	42	12	54
Separated	15	10	25

The sample was somewhat older than the community as a whole. Three fifths of the men were between twenty-five and thirty-nine years of age, 23 were forty or above and 17 were under twenty five. Nearly half of the women were over forty and most of the rest were under twenty five. The older women included eight who were living on their own (a phenomenon E. Goody has noted as frequent among the Gonja; half of these women were Ga). Elderly women were more likely to claim to have no friends than any other subgroup in the sample.

Aliens were well represented in Ashaiman before the 1969 Compliance Order. Since their situation in 1970 was delicate, only three men were included in the sample. Northern Ghanaians were much less represented in the Ashaiman population, but seven were included in the sample since it was felt that their social relations might well be different from those of southerners. Only one of the northerners was a woman. Most of the sample came from Eastern or Volta Region or the Accra Capital District, as does most of Ashaiman's population. Nearly one in ten had lived in Ashaiman for at least ten years and 15 per cent had come within the previous eighteen months, but nearly half (46 per cent) had lived there between three and five years. The wife had often joined husband about a year after his arrival or the man had married after a year or two in town. They had an average of two children, though older couples usually had more, as would be expected. Two fifths had completed middle school, 10 per cent had gone beyond this, and 36 per cent had never attended school. Semi-skilled and skilled jobs predominated among the men, with many of the latter in self-employment. Three were farmers and a few others farmed on the side. Three fourths of the women were traders; only three had no independent income.

Married and separated women were as likely as the men to have come to Ashaiman for work, though women gave family as a reason for moving twice as often as the men. In both cases, the single tended to choose Ashaiman because they had family there more often than did individuals who were already married. The housing available in Ashaiman was considered part of the reason for moving there by about half the men, but by only two women, indicating that women migrants may find it easier than male migrants to move in with relatives.

Eight per cent of the women and 33 per cent of the men said that it is hard to get to know people in Ashaiman. The nature of their daily life makes it easier for women to make friends than it is for men, assuming that both are equally interested in doing so. Even if she is a seamstress or trader, the woman often spends considerable time in the compound preparing food and caring for the children. If she trades in the market, she can spend the day talking with neighbouring stall holders between customers. If she is a housewife, there are many hours free for gossip, hair braiding, Ludo, etc. She will often go to the market or standpipe with her co-tenants and may join them in cleaning the compound, washing clothes, etc. A woman may be isolated because she does not 'fit in' socially (Parkin 1969:56), because of her sharp tongue, or because she chooses not to associate with co-tenants and neighbours, but this appears to be more a matter of her own choosing than it is for a man. If she wishes to avoid close friendships, she can do so, in any case she is likely to have many acquaintances. Both friendship and acquaintanceship may be more difficult for the introverted man, since his contacts are more likely to be impersonal.

Men are more likely than women to migrate to a place where they know no one. Lacking a friendly kinsman to introduce them around, they must start from scratch. They often find their first friends at the Labour Office where they wait with other newcomers for a job opening. But even if they have a relative in town (and four fifths had at least one), most of their potential contacts are working, so there are fewer opportunities for meeting. When the newcomer finds a job, he may have difficulty in getting to know his workmates because he works alone at a machine and those he comes to know may be seen only at work because they live some distance away. If he walks to work, he may get to know others walking the same way at the same time but one seldom sees more than two men walking together. If his firm provides a bus, he may ride with different people on each journey and not become acquainted with any of them. Young men certainly do make friends, often many friends, but it is by no means an easy or automatic process for some of them. A few manage to know no one at work, buy their food from passing hawkers and spend their free time in their room.

On the question of whether living with one's spouse make any difference to the acquaintanceship process, three fifths of the men said that a single person has the easiest time and nearly a third could see no difference; only 14 per cent felt that men living with their wives find it easier to know people. The women were evenly divided between those who said single women have an easier time and those who saw no difference, perhaps because almost all were already married when they came to Ashaiman. Only 4 per cent said the woman living with her husband makes more acquaintances. Thus, both men and women are agreed that the single person has more opportunities and can make the most of them. The rest of this paper will demonstrate the type of social relations which characterize single, married and separated people in Ashaiman.

Single people see their relatives fairly often, partly because they eat out more than others and often take meals with relatives. The separated were least likely to have relatives in town and those who had relatives generally saw them less often than either the single or the married. The

separated eat out more than the married but as often with fellow-townsmen, co-tenants or neighbours as with kinsmen. Only one single man and one single woman reported never eating with kinsmen, whereas 40% of the separated men and women reported never eating with kinsmen. It was expected that women would often share meals in the compound, especially when the men were away at work, but this was true of only a quarter of the married women. It appears that most of these women attend to themselves and their children; single and separated women are more likely to share meals. Married men are more likely to share meals with kinsmen and workmates (usually at work) than with co-tenants or neighbours. When at home, their wives cater for them.

Asked how many co-tenants, neighbours, kinsmen, workmates and others they sit and talk with frequently, the narrower contacts of the separated are evident. Single men are somewhat more likely to talk frequently with people in each of these categories than are the married or the separated, but married men are just as likely as the single to have more than four people with whom they exchange views and gossip. When the separated men have such contacts, they generally have fewer than either the married or the single. Many have only one friend with whom they sit and talk, whereas five eighths of the single men had friends in every category. (Only a third of the married men were similarly wide-ranging in their contacts). Women all talked frequently with at least one co-tenant (and two thirds of them, with more than four) and most of them talked with neighbours and kinsmen fairly frequently. Most of them reported that they had no workmates, but otherwise they appear very similar to the men in the quantity and range of their contacts. It was expected that women would have a narrower range than the men and that they would talk more frequently with co-tenants and neighbours. The evidence from this small sample indicates that the second hypothesis is probably true, but that marriage in a southern Ghanaian town is no more a limitation on a woman's contacts than it is for her husband.

In one aspect of life marriage is a social advantage. Respondents were asked if they had ever had a party; an outdooing was given as an example, and this may well have affected the results. Half of the married men reported they had had a party, compared to 31 of the separated (some of whose wives may have been in residence at the time) and only 6 per cent of the single men. Only one woman reported a party. Marriage, the birth of children and, at least in Nigeria the children's birthday provide occasions for parties. Single people may sit and drink with a group of friends without calling it a party, whereas the married may make more formal arrangements on such rarer occasions. Asked who they had invited to their party or, if they had never given a party, who they would invite should an occasion arise, the single and married gave similar responses and the separated showed themselves somewhat less social, even in desire. Women showed about the same level of sociability as the men; they are probably behind many guest lists.

Finally, respondents were asked to name several friends (as many as the interviewer could get) and provide background data on each — age, sex, place of origin, ethnicity, religion, occupation, marital status, length of time spent in Ashaiman, where they first met and what they did together. We then ascertained what the friends had in common and how many of the friends knew each other—how closely meshed the friendship network was. Friendship is not an easy word to convey in translation. The operational definition we used as 'the people you move with the people you see most often,' but a fair number of our respondents claimed to have no friends at all, either because they did not feel close enough to anyone to put them in this category or because they did not want to supply the information requested (this came toward the end of a

rather long interview). A quarter of the women claimed to have no friends and another quarter claimed to have only one, whereas the median for single men was five and for both married and separated it was four.

About two-thirds of the bachelors have friends who are married and about three-fifths of the married men have friends who are bachelors. Thus, marriage does not set up a barrier to friendship, though some men report that they see less of their friends after marriage. Friendship groups also tended to be mixed as far as age and education were concerned 40 per cent covered more than a ten-year age range and only 40 per cent were all of the same education level. Young, single men often have at least one friend who is considerably older than themselves. He may be a relative or fellow townsman, but sometimes he is just someone he has met in town who takes an interest in the younger man. Married men had friends of the widest age and educational background and separated men had friends most like themselves. Though the numbers are small, the same was true of the women.

A majority of men in all three categories have friends from regions other than their own, a good indication of the mixing which goes on in urban areas such as Ashaiman. In this case separated men were least likely to name friends only from their own region and married men, most likely. Both married and separated women were fairly conservative in finding friends of the same origin as themselves, perhaps because they are more limited linguistically than the men. Forty per cent of the separated women had friends only from their own home town. Separated men and women tend to name friends who live in the same house or nearby, whereas both the single and the married have friends who live further away—some of them lived outside Ashaiman, in Tema or even Accra. A majority had friends in different occupations than themselves, though the separated most often had the same occupation as their friends; the same was true of religion.

Perhaps because they had arrived in town most recently, the single most often reported meeting at least some of their friends at home. However, they had also met many friends since they had come to town. The married and the separated were somewhat less wide-ranging in their sources of friends. Though the separated seem to prefer friends of similar background to themselves, they do not appear to be living a 'ghetto' existence, associating only with fellows from home on the pattern of Mayer's 'red' migrants (Mayer 1962). Only two of them had met all their friends at home. As expected, women appear somewhat more likely than men to find friends among cotenants and neighbours (all the percentages are slightly higher than for men). This needs confirmation with larger numbers.

A crucial point for our hypothesis of less sociability for married men is the frequency with which they see their friends. As expected, the married report seeing their friends less often than either the single or the separated and this is confirmed in failure to mention seeing their friends when reporting their activities over a four day period.

Though the separated may have few friends, they appear to be close to them; they have plenty of time to sit and talk and/or drink with friends, since there is no wife (and no children) waiting for their attention. The married have a relatively wider range of friends, as befits the most stable element of the community, but they have less time to give these friends and see many of them only occasionally and briefly. Single people have more time to give to friends than the separated because they usually participate in a wider variety of social activities.

This wider range of friendships among single men is evident from the question about how well their friends know each other. Of those with more than one friend, 69 per cent of the separated, 64 per cent of the married and 50 per cent of the single men had friends who were all well known to each other. In most other cases, the friends were at least acquainted one sometimes makes friends by meeting them at another friend's house. Single men's friendships also appear to be somewhat less deep, perhaps because they have only recently been formed and have not yet been tested. When asked who they would go to for help, 75 per cent of the single men said they would go to a kinsman, compared to 40 per cent of the married men, 20 per cent of the separated men and 72 per cent of the women. Women are more ready to consult their husbands. About two fifths of both married and separated men would go to a friend for help. Very few people said they would consult a co-tenant, perhaps because they find these people already too interested in their private affairs. Fellow townsmen were also ignored.

TABLE 2
Where Friends Were Met by Marital Status (Percentages)

<i>Sex and Marital Status</i>	<i>Met Friends</i>					<i>(b) N</i>
	<i>At Home</i>	<i>At Work</i>	<i>Co-tenant/ Neighbour</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>(a) Total</i>	
Males						
Single	73	67	53	7	200	15
Married	60	54	46	11	171	37
Separated	53	53	47	20	173	15
Females	(c)					
Single	(50)	(50)	(100)	0	(200)	2
Married	(44)	(33)	(56)	0	(133)	9
Separated	(25)	(25)	(62)	0	(112)	8

(a) Totals are over 100 per cent because of multiple responses.

(b) Those with no friends have been omitted.

(c) Per cents for females are in parentheses to warn readers of very small bases.

TABLE 3
Frequency of Seeing Friends, Men Only (Percentages)

	<i>Single</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>Separated</i>
Sees daily			
Mentioned in report	63	40	74
Failed to mention	6	12	13
Sees less often			
Mentioned in report	19	26	13
Failed to mention	6	10	0
No friends	6	12	0
Total	100	100	100
N	16	42	15

Marriage appears to bring a change in social life chiefly because the married man is engaged with his wife and children and hence has less time for his friends and even for his relatives. Some of the casual friends of bachelor days are lost and other friends are seen less frequently, sometimes only at work. The most interesting finding is the limited sociability of men who are married but whose wives are not with them in the town. While the separated women were above the average age for the community and may have been less social because all their energies are taken up with supporting themselves through trading and caring for their children, the separated men were mostly between twenty five and thirty four years of age and over half of them had lived with their wives at some time during their stay in Ashaiman. Since none of them had children with them they were apparently free to socialize as widely and easily as the single men. However, it appears that the habits and restraints of married life limited their activities and the missing half of the conjugal union meant that they did not participate in the socialization patterns of the married. Their most common occasion for meeting others was in eating out, but they did this much less than single men, either because the single got more sympathy and hence more offers of meals than the separated or because the latter got used to eating at home when they married and preferred it. Lastly, the norms of the community evidently allow much more freedom to the single than to the married man; the latter are expected to lead a less active social life, even if their wives are not present to supervise it. Male dominance obviously has its limitations.

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